

charged. These are very tragic events. In addition to prosecuting the criminals who commit these horrific crimes, we can do more to prevent them, we should close the gun show loophole so that it is more difficult for criminals to gain access to guns.

In 1994, Congress passed the Brady Law, which requires Federal Firearm Licensees to perform criminal background checks on gun buyers. However, a loophole in this law allows unlicensed private gun sellers to sell firearms at gun shows without conducting a background check.

In April of last year, Senator JACK REED introduced the Gun Show Background Check Act which would close this loophole in the law. The Reed bill, which is supported by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, extends the Brady Bill background check requirement to all sellers of firearms at gun shows. I cosponsored that bill because I believe it is critical that we do all we can to prevent guns from getting into the hands of criminals and terrorists. I urge the Senate to debate and pass this common sense gun-safety legislation.

#### CELEBRATING OVER A HALF CENTURY OF SERVICE TO VETERANS

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, I am pleased today to say a few words about the Paralyzed Veterans of America, PVA to those of us who work on veterans matters, in connection with the organization's PVA Awareness Week, which takes place next week.

PVA began in February 1947, when delegates from seven groups of paralyzed veterans from around the country met at the Hines VA Hospital in Chicago, IL. Those veterans agreed to form a national organization to address the needs of spinal cord injured veterans. They believed that veterans with spinal cord injuries would have the strongest voice in speaking for veterans with such injuries and for all who were similarly disabled, a belief that has been borne out over the years. The original members of PVA also emphasized the need both to conduct research to find a cure for spinal cord injury while, at the same time, providing for the basic, immediate needs of spinal cord injured veterans.

Since its inception, PVA has dedicated itself to the well being of some of America's most catastrophically disabled veterans as it has developed a unique expertise on a wide variety of issues involving the special needs of its members, veterans of the armed forces who have experienced spinal cord injury, SCI, or dysfunction. PVA, which received a Congressional charter as a veterans service organization in 1971, is a dynamic, broad-based organization with more than 40 chapters and sub-chapters nationwide and nearly 20,000 members. In addition to its Washington, D.C. headquarters, PVA operates 58 service offices around the country to serve the needs of all veterans

seeking Department of Veterans Affairs' claims and benefits.

PVA is a leading advocate for quality health care not only for spinal cord injured veterans, but for all other veterans as well. They also continue to press for research and education addressing spinal cord injury and dysfunction.

PVA's commitment to research can be seen in its sponsorship of the Spinal Cord Research Foundation which supports research to alleviate, and ultimately end, medical and functional consequences of paralysis; its endowment in 1980 of a Professorship in SCI Medicine at Stanford University; its creation of the Spinal Cord Injury Education and Training Foundation to support innovative education and training programs; and its role in establishing the PVA-EPVA Center for Neuroscience and Regeneration Research at Yale University along with the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Yale University, with the goal of restoration of function in people with spinal cord dysfunction.

PVA also coordinates the activities of two coalitions of professional, payer, and consumer groups, the Consortium for Spinal Cord Medicine and the Multiple Sclerosis Council, which develop clinical practice guidelines defining standards of care for people with spinal cord injury and multiple sclerosis.

While PVA's Congressional charter requires it to devote substantial resources to representing veterans in their claims for benefits from VA, the PVA Veterans Benefits Department goes above and beyond the call of duty, providing assistance and representation, without charge, to veterans with a spinal cord dysfunction and other veterans seeking health care and other benefits for which they are eligible. This assistance is offered through a network of PVA national service officers across the nation who assist veterans in making claims for benefits and monitor medical care at local VA medical facilities. PVA's national service officers assist claimants through every stage of the VA claims process and also offer representation to veterans who have claims pending before the Social Security Administration.

PVA's advocacy does not stop at the Board of Veterans' Appeals. It has one of the most active presences at the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, arguing cases that have set precedents that have helped thousands, if not millions, of veterans and their families.

Other key PVA programs include its Architecture Program, which plays an important role in the lives of severely disabled veterans with quality design and construction of affordable and accessible housing; its Health Analysis Program, which keeps a constant eye on the performance of the VA health care system as well as other health care systems in the public and private

sector; and its Sports and Recreation Program which is dedicated to promoting a range of activities for its members and other people with disabilities, with special emphasis on activities that enhance lifetime health and fitness, including through co-sponsorship of the National Veterans Wheelchair Games with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

For 16 years, PVA has co-authored an important, highly respected policy guide for the Congress, *The Independent Budget: A Comprehensive Policy Document Created by Veterans for Veterans*, with the Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars which addresses the needs of veterans on issues ranging from health care to benefits and the resources required to meet these needs in the VA budget every year.

PVA's Government Relations staff is well-known here on Capitol Hill. Its Advocacy Program is a leading voice for civil rights and opportunities that maximize independence of individuals who have experienced spinal cord injury or disease, or other severe disabilities. PVA played an important role in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. It continues its advocacy as an active member of the Consortium for Citizens With Disabilities. Its Legislation Program staff is directly involved in every budget, legislative, and policy initiative affecting veterans under consideration in the Congress every year.

Over the years, I have relied heavily on PVA members in my State of West Virginia to keep me informed about the issues so critical to veterans with spinal cord injuries. I am particularly grateful for the wisdom and counsel of my friend Randy Pleva, President of WV PVA and one of PVA's National vice presidents. I do not know a more dedicated and compassionate advocate for paralyzed veterans.

Those of us who work with PVA every day recognize the dedication and expertise that this organization brings to Capitol Hill. The organization is one of the top national veterans' service organizations in terms of expertise and dedication. We must acknowledge the extreme sacrifices that the members of their organization have made in service to this country and honor the fact that PVA members continue that service on behalf of veterans and all Americans with disabilities.

At a time when this country has soldiers deployed to far-off lands in defense of freedom, it is important that we recognize these men and women who have served this country in the past and continue to serve our nations' veterans today. I look forward to a continuing partnership with PVA to provide for the needs of veterans, past, present, and future.

#### LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Madam President, I rise today to speak about hate